

## Premier PD206T Resonator Drum Kit



By Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

Premier Drums, from England, have been made since 1922 by the DellaPorta family. Currently Europe's largest percussion manufacturer, Premier is distributed in the USA by The Selmer Company. There are no American-made parts on Premier kits—even the drumheads are their own. Any drums that have won the Queen's Award To Industry certainly deserve a look in this Close-Up column.

The *Resonator* drum shell was devised by Premier and drummer Kenny Clare. 3/8" air pocket separates a conventional outer shell from a thin inner shell. The inner shell has no fittings to inhibit vibration—it rests on a 1/2" hoop at the top and bottom of the outer shell. The concept is for maximum resonance and volume without screws, washers, etc. inside the drum, cutting its natural vibrations. It is a "sound box" inside a drum that, tests claim, produces 18% greater volume. The shells are birch, and sprayed inside with polyurethane.

The PD206T kit components are: 14x22 bass drum, 16x16 floor tom, 9x13 and 10x14 tom-toms, and a 5x14 metal snare drum. The letter "T" refers to the Trilok hardware used.

This 14x22 bass drum has 10 double-ended stretch lugs with cast claws and "faucet-handle" style tensioners. There's a felt strip muffler behind each head, and wooden hoops inlaid with plastic. The spurs are the folding bent-rod type, locating into cast blocks and are adjustable for span and horizontal length by means of a fat T-screw. The tips are capped with removable rubber feet that expose a small steel point. With the rubber, the drum has a tendency to skate on floors. The pointed tip stops all forward movement. Fitted into the upper side of the shell is a block to accept a cymbal holder arm. Premier includes the cymbal holder with this kit, but I find it impractical to use in a double tom set-up. Perhaps if they lengthened the rod to allow it clearance over and above the

tom-tom, it could then be workable. The bass drum was fitted with Premier's own *Black Range* heads. They are similar to Remo's C.S. heads, having a black dot patch, but Premier's dot has a 1" hole in its center, looking like a donut.

The 22" bass drum with its *Resonator* shell certainly had some power and volume to it. The drum sounded good with both heads on, without any pillows, pads, tape, etc. it resounded just enough to give a good "thud" with a tiny bit of tone vibration. The L-shaped faucet lever tensioners posed a bit of a problem when mounting the pedal. The way I had it tuned, the bottom two interfered and had to be turned away from the mounting area (changing the tuning a little), so the pedal could fit on.

The 13" and 14" mounted toms have six and eight stretch lugs, respectively. The 16" floor tom has 16 separate lugs. All the drums have die-molded steel hoops, round *slotted* tension screws, and knob-operated internal dampers (rectangular white felt pads). The floor tom has three smoothed metal legs locating into spur-type block brackets. Each drum has one venthole which is found on the big red "P" on Premier's badge—which also has a serial number stamped onto it. Both mounted toms have tacked labels beneath their badges stating, *Resonator*.

The double tom-tom holder seems to be an enlarged version of the recently deceased Ludwig, with a few changes. The down tube is ovalled and passes through a steel base block mounted a little towards the bass drum's front. On either side, two large T-screws press a steel clamping strip inside which holds the tube in place. Thanks to the oval shape of this tube, there is no chance of the drums twisting their position. At the top of the holder tube are two knurled "L"-arms, tightened via a wing screw and eye bolt. These arms locate into brackets on the drums like the bass drum spur blocks. The tom-tom is secured to

the "L"-arm by a massive T-screw. Many positions can be obtained with this holder, from extremely close to wide-spread.

I found the drums to have very sensitive tension rods. A slight decrease or increase in tension at one rod would drastically change the pitch and/or tone of the entire drum. Fitted with the *Black Range* heads, the drums could be tuned to almost any type sound. And throughout the spectrum, every tuning had good volume and a tasteful bit of resonance. The floor tom, especially, had a deep, powerful sound. The whole concept of the *Resonator* shell proves itself well, even though, I had a hard time trying to get the 14" tom to sound as well as its 13" neighbor.

I contacted Premier in England on removing the *Resonator's* liner shell.

The liner is held in the shell by its own pressure. The joint inside will spring open, using a special tool, allowing the interior to be lifted out. To replace, the tool fits between the overlapping joint edges, and the liner is then tapped back into place. I quote the Premier spokesman: "With a little practice, it's not a difficult job . . . the guys at the factory have the job off to a fine art; even a bass drum liner takes no more than two minutes!"

Premier includes their Model 2000 5x14 snare drum with this kit. The drum has a chrome-finished metal shell with eight double-ended lugs, and an internal damper. The strainer is a parallel-action one, using a center-throw lever. At each end of the drum there is an adjusting knob for even tension of snare wires. Inside the shell, a four-sided rod and a patented steel *Flobeam* snare bar support work in conjunction with the parallel mechanism. The snare strands are paired in 12-strand groups, giving a 24-strand wire assembly. They extend past the head and connect to the strainer and butt sides with "levelling screws". So, the snares press against the head instead

of being pulled around it. Right out of its box, the drum had a severe "buzz" to it—at some point, the snares weren't making complete contact. Trying to adjust the side knobs proved unfruitful. They would bind up before the snares were tightened to proper tension. The two-page manual that comes with the 2000 snare recommends leaving the levelling screws alone as they are factory-set for performance. I did, however, fool with them, in hopes that they would solve the "buzz" problem, but they did not. I don't know what to make of this. But, in any event, from what I could tell, the drum did have a good crispness to it with the inverted *Black Range* (coated with the dot underneath) batter head. For heavy rock playing, I'm not sure that this would be the drum you'd want. For quieter situations, the sensitivity of this snare drum could be helpful. I would have liked to have seen one of Premier's simpler model drums, as there was a definite problem with this strainer.

The *PD206T* kit contains the *Trilok* line of stands. *Trilok* is the top line in Premier's hardware. The bases of all the stands have shaped "U" legs, making them light enough for portability, yet sturdy enough for aggressive playing. Premier was the first to come out with the "U" leg. All the *Trilok* stands have self-levelling feet. The feet are tipped with rubber cones that can be threaded up to expose a sharp spike point. And, there are massive T-screws at every adjustment point. Also, all hardware and fittings have what seems to be some of the best chrome plating around.

Two *PD324* cymbal stands are included. These will spread really wide and extend to 66". Each stand has two height-adjustable tiers. The top height tube joint has a nylon cone bushing; the bottom tube joint clamps a split steel strip to the tube in an indirect fashion. The ratchet tilters do not match the rest of the stands' powerful looks—they are just *too miniscule*. Premier might consider fattening their tilters to balance everything out. One observation I made is that when folding up the stands, some of the huge T-screws tend to get in each other's way. It would probably be better to dismantle the base section from its height tubes anyway, as I rather doubt the stand would fit into a regular trap case as one piece.

The *Trilok* hi-hat also has wide-stance legs, and a fat height tube. The frame base tilts toward the player when set-up, and it has two sprung spurs at the bottom. The stand has a one-piece footboard with a toe stop, matching the 252 pedal footboard (described later). Pedal-to-rod linkage is an adjustable-length flexible PVC nylon strap. I must say that I really dislike this sort of linkage, as the

pedal has a tendency to "kick back" at you. A single rod pulls two parallel external unenclosed springs. Tension adjustment is accomplished by large counterlock washers above the legs. A long sprung screw tilts the bottom cymbal. The top rod has six notches in it along its height interlocking with the clutch's T-screw, to help arrest any downward slippage of the top cymbal. The stand has a very smooth, responsive feel to it, discounting the flex strap. Tension is very easy to adjust from the playing position.

The *PD323* snare stand is separate from its contemporaries. Instead of having a basket holder, this snare stand uses the old tri-arm principle having two arms at a fixed length, the other is mobile. However, there are some differences from the usual triple-armed snare holders. The mobile arm has 12 holes in it with a thumb screw locking, allowing up to a 16" diameter drum to fit. This arm is also adjustable vertically when the wing screw beneath it is tightened, pushing the arm till it locks hard against the drum. The height tube has a steel ring surrounding it which is attached to a short pivot arm, which in turn, is attached to the tri-arm cradle. When the wing screw between the ring and pivot arm is loosened, the O-ring can move freely throughout the tube height, bringing the cradle with it, thus, adjusting the angle. Premier's innovative changes in the tri-arm snare holder have impressed me. The whole stand is quite sturdy, none of the adjustments seem to want to slip, and I also like the white ribbed rubber-sheathed arms instead of the traditional black.

The Premier 252 pedal has come to be one of my favorites. It has a single post, enclosing a compression spring. The one-piece footboard has an adjustable/removable toe stop, along with a fixed toe stop at its tip. It's raised a bit by a base plate and beam which connects to the frame. The footboard can be adjusted laterally as well as vertically. Linkage is done with a PVC nylon strap, like the hi-hat, but seems to work a lot better here.

The pedal has an extremely broad hoop clamp which tightens down with a long screw rod found at the top of the pedal. This is the easiest system I've ever seen. The 252 uses an "accelerator cam" action, giving it a great "feel". The compression spring's tension is adjustable at the top of its chamber via a knurled knob. In fact, the action is so good, the 252 could even be played with no tension at all! The only thing I'm not happy about on this pedal is that the lateral footboard adjust screw would loosen up lots of the time, causing lateral angle to change. (In my case, the footboard drifted left.) Besides that, (which could be solved with Loctite), I have nothing but praise for the 252. It's a sizeable piece of pedal, but when played, responds accurately, and feels light and natural.

The *PD206T* Resonator kit tested was finished in "Polychromatic Gold" covering. Premier has available a variety of finishes including other polychromatics, solid gloss colors, copper, natural wood, and so on. The finish was flawless; I'm told it is actually shrunk onto the shell. My British Premier catalog has a separate finish line for the *Resonator* kits: solid colors with a black stripe. I assume Selmer will be importing these finishes in the future.

By the way, the kit is available at a lesser price with the flush-based *Lokfast* stands.

Premier still really hasn't received its proper visibility here in the States. Besides the *Resonator* kits, they have two other lines—the 6000 and the *Standard*. The USA will also possibly be seeing at some time, a less expensive line derived from Premier's British *Beverley* kits. They also do complete lines of tuned percussion and educational instruments.

The *Resonator* idea surely does make sense. There is increased resonance and projection due to the fully-vibrating inner shell. The drums are built well and look good. For a jazz drummer, they're the cat's meow, and for a rock drummer, the increased volume will certainly help to get his sound across.





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